



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

4 SENTENCED IN INTERNATIONAL MONEY LAUNDERING AND NARCOTICS INVESTIGATION

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that four members of an international money laundering and narcotics organization based out of Colombia were sentenced this week for their conviction to conducting illegal financial transactions to generate money through the illegal sale and distribution of narcotics in violation of Title 21, United States Code (USC), Section 1956 and 982 and Title 21 USC, Section 846, 853 and 881.

ICE along with state, local and international partners arrested 24 individuals on Oct. 15, 2004 following a multi-agency long-term investigation that revealed their involvement in a narcotics and money laundering organization headed by Juan Isidro Toloza-Pena and Juan Andres Toloza-Pena. Among the 24 individuals arrested, were the four men that pleaded guilty in June 2004 and sentenced in the United States District Court of Puerto Rico last week. The Dominicans Ramon Germosen, 31, and Victor Miliano, 39, were sentenced to 24 and 57 months in prison respectively while United States citizens Luis Torres Velazquez, 40, and Miguel Madera-Cortijo, 29, were sentenced to 120 and 46 months. All four must undergo a three year period of supervised release after their release from prison.

The ICE-led investigation revealed that the organization was based out of Colombia, but operated in several locations including Puerto Rico, Florida, Venezuela, St. Maarten, and the Netherlands Antilles.

The defendants used a complex system known as the Black Market Peso Exchange to launder their illicit drug proceeds, the indictment alleges. The Black Market Peso Exchange is a decades-old money-laundering infrastructure that is estimated to handle billions worth of illicit dollars annually. It is among the primary means by which Colombian drug cartels convert their U.S.-based drug dollars into “clean” pesos that they can use in Colombia.

The objective of the Colombian-based criminal organization was to generate money through the illegal sale and distribution of narcotics so it could be later transferred from Puerto Rico and Miami to the Colombian owners. The defendants and their co-conspirators also provided multiple bank accounts throughout the United States, Colombia, Costa Rica and China and instructions for the electronic transfer of the money to the Colombians.

The investigation revealed that the organization had laundered over \$4 million into 14 properties located in Colombia and 16 different international and domestic bank accounts. The organization was also linked to illegal drug proceeds in the amount of over a half million dollars.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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